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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES

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State Dept. review completed

YUGOSLAVIA

Croat Republic Leaders To Change Hats

Recently announced nominations to top government posts in Croatia indicate that the core of the regime that picked up the pieces after the 1971 purge of Croat nationalists will remain intact. A restructuring of the republic government to mirror the federal apparatus will draw Croatia--with the other republics following suit--into closer "collaboration" with central authorities.

Some of the key changes will be:

- the posting of Vladimir Bakaric, the grand old man of Croatian politics, to the nine-member collective state presidency in Belgrade.
- reassignment of Josip Vrhovec from the number two slot in the Croat party to head the republic government. Vrhovec lacks experience in economic administration, but his ability to control economic nationalism was probably deemed more important.
- creation of a nine-member republic presidency that will probably work closely with its federal counterpart in formulating policy guidelines and settling inter-republic disputes.
- nomination of Mrs. Milka Planinc, Croat party boss, to the republic presidency. This move means Mrs. Planinc will probably remain as party leader. A seat on this collective body is reserved for the republic party chief.

Overall, the changes represent a move toward continuity. All the nominees are mid-fiftyish and all are veterans of the partisan war. The promised influx of new leaders from

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the post-war generation thus has not materialized, at least in Croatia. The younger Croats were highly susceptible to nationalist slogans in 1971, however, and younger men in the other republics may have a better chance to win responsible posts.

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HUNGARY

Maurer's Visit to Budapest - A Pail of Air

[REDACTED] has confirmed our impression that Romanian Premier Maurer's visit to Budapest last week was long on atmospherics and short on substance. The visit reportedly was meant as a demonstration of "good relations" after a two year hiatus in top-level exchanges.

[REDACTED] it was difficult to scrape up enough business to satisfy protocol requirements, and the relatively insignificant agreements signed bear out this assertion. The communique's stress on developing political, economic, and cultural relations suggests there was no satisfactory progress in these areas. The routine discussion of international questions was apparently brief and barren, judging by the communique's terse statement that "views were exchanged on topical international questions."

While the results of the visit do not represent any major warming of Romanian-Hungarian relations, they probably don't portend any down-turn either.

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POLAND

Husak's Mystery Visit

The US Embassy in Warsaw has finally pinned down March 11-14 as the dates for the visit of Czechoslovak party chief Husak.

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Both the Warsaw and Prague media have alluded to the event in the past few days, but for some reason have failed to publish the arrival time, delegation makeup, or agenda. We surmise that Gierek will wish to discuss with his colleague from the south such ordinary matters as economic, cultural, and ideological cooperation. The semi-secrecy surrounding the meeting may also mean that something more important is in store.

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HUNGARY

Military Chief to Visit Yugoslavia

Hungarian Defense Minister Czinege will make an official visit to Belgrade sometime in the next week.

This will be Czinege's first trip to Yugoslavia since 1965, and may be part of the general Soviet effort to improve ties with Yugoslavia. While the two sides may explore ways to improve military cooperation, the Yugoslavs will also seek reassurances of Budapest's good will for the post-Tito succession period. Czinege could well brief the Yugoslavs on current Hungarian military exercises, which have included a substantial reserve call-up, and try to dispel any Yugoslav concern over rumors of Soviet troop increases in Hungary.

Military Reserve Call-up

The size and duration of the call-up suggests that it is a preventive measure in anticipation of the March 15 anniversary of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution. In recent years the nationalist holiday has sparked some youthful demonstrations in Budapest. Last year the police dispersed "several hundred" young people and made 41 arrests. Calling up reserves puts the military on increased readiness, but more importantly siphons off some of the kids who otherwise might be tempted to join in demonstrations.

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ROMANIA

Veiled Criticism of "New Atlantic Charter"

A recent article in the Romanian party daily, Scinteia, hints that self interest is the primary motive behind Washington's proposal of a new system of political, military, and economic relations which would include Japan. The US reportedly hopes to solve a backlog of economic problems resulting from Japanese industrial competitiveness by channeling the Japanese trade invasion toward Western Europe. As is frequent Romanian practice, the article uses the opinions of others to express its criticism of the "new Atlantic Charter" and its scepticism of the possibilities for success.

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